

**CALIFORNIA STATE ATHLETIC COMMISSION
INITIAL STATEMENT OF REASONS**

HEARING DATE: Thursday, January 27, 2005.

SUBJECT MATTER OF PROPOSED REGULATIONS: Mixed Martial Arts and Kickboxing

SECTIONS AFFECTED:

Amend Sections: 500; 501; 502; 510; 513; 514; 520; 522; 530; 531; 533

Adopt Sections: 503; 512; 515; 517; 518; 523; 524

Repeal Sections: 521

Specific Purpose of each adoption amendment or repeal

The specific purpose of this proposed regulatory change is to provide specific regulations that will govern full contact mixed martial arts events and be in compliance with the recent amendment to Business and Professions (B&P) Code Sections 18627 and 18640 wherein the term "martial arts" was redefined to include any combination of martial arts including mixed martial arts and directs the California State Athletic Commission to oversee these events. The current regulations only address kickboxing and do not provide for regulation of other full contact martial arts disciplines. Some sections of the current kickboxing regulations are antiquated and are no longer relevant to what is happening in international competition. A new form of martial arts has surfaced known as mixed martial arts or "submission fighting". These bouts employ such techniques as choke holds and joint manipulation to force an opponent to submit or "tap-out". This is basically a "grappling" sport, which is full contact. Because these events are full contact mixed martial arts, the Commission should regulate them for the health and safety of the participants. These regulatory changes will provide the mixed martial arts sports with the foundation that is necessary to regulate the sport and to protect the health and safety of the participants. The updates to the kickboxing sections will bring them into compliance with what is currently being practiced on an international level without jeopardizing the health and safety of the participants. One other primary purpose is to ensure that the regulations clearly delineate the distinct differences between mixed martial arts and kickboxing.

Section 500 The Commission determined that the citation section be cited as the "Professional Full Contact Martial Arts and Kickboxing Rules" based on input received from those in the profession who understand the need to have rules that clearly delineate the distinct differences between Martial Arts and Kickboxing yet allow for rules inclusive of the vast majority of Martial Arts disciplines including mixed martial arts. Mixed martial arts is a combination of the striking arts and grappling arts which is acceptable internationally and in recent years has been legalized in several states including Nevada, Florida, New Jersey, Louisiana, Colorado, Oklahoma, Utah and the Mohegan Sun in Connecticut. It should be mentioned that the regulations used in Nevada were developed based on the California mixed martial arts regulations.

Section 501 This section clearly defines the distinction between martial arts and kickboxing.

Section 502 This section defines which professional boxing rules apply and which rules do not apply to martial arts or kickboxing. The sections identified within this section are not applicable to the sport of martial arts because they apply to the sport of boxing, in particular the boxing event and show regulations.

Section 503 This section establishes the procedures for opponent selection for martial arts contests conducted under a tournament format. The commission included in this section a stipulation that the Commission will determine the initial opponents in the first round of a tournament format event by random draw of names. This procedure will insure the initial pairing of opponents is impartial.

Section 510 This section establishes the minimum and maximum male and female weight classes for mixed martial arts and kickboxing. The weight categories were based upon input received from organizations interested in mixed martial arts and kickboxing and their knowledge and expertise in mixed martial arts and kickboxing. The weight categories chosen were considered the most viable, logical, and reasonable. In addition, the weight categories chosen meet the industry standards and would not jeopardize the health and safety of the fighters.

Section 512 This section increases the kickboxing rest period to a maximum of two (2) minutes to accommodate the Muay Thai style of fighting and differentiates the length and number of rounds and between rounds rest period for kickboxing and mixed martial arts.

- a) This section increases the rest period between rounds to a maximum two minutes for non-title kickboxing bouts to accommodate Muay Thai style fighting. Based upon input received from organizations interested in mixed martial arts and kickboxing and their knowledge and expertise in mixed martial arts and kickboxing it was determined that all or majority of the various sanctioning bodies' bout rules do not exceed ten (10) rounds, each round does not exceed three (3) minute duration, and the rest period between rounds is not less than one (1) minute nor longer than two (2) minutes duration. For title bouts, the skill level and experience of the fighter is greater, and therefore it was determined that allowing the Commission to approve title bouts for those sanctioning bodies whose rules call for title bouts of greater than ten (10) rounds duration and/or call for rounds greater than three (3) minutes duration was the most viable choice. However, for safety reasons, in no event shall the rest period between rounds be less than one (1) minute.
- b) This section establishes the maximum number of rounds, the maximum duration of each round, and increases the minimum and maximum rest period between rounds for non-title martial arts bouts other than kickboxing. For non-title martial arts bouts other than kickboxing, based upon input received from organizations interested in mixed martial arts and kickboxing and their knowledge and expertise in mixed martial arts and kickboxing it was determined that all of or the majority of the various sanctioning bodies' bout rules do not exceed five (5) rounds, each round does not exceed five (5) minutes duration, and the rest period between rounds is not less than one (1) minute nor more than two (2) minutes. For title bouts, the skill level and experience of the fighter is greater, and therefore it was determined that allowing the Commission to approve title bouts for those sanctioning bodies whose rules call for title bouts of greater than five (5) rounds duration and/or call for rounds of greater than five (5) minutes duration was the most viable choice. However, for safety reasons, in no event shall the rest period between rounds be less than one (1) minute.

Section 513 This section has been amended to clarify the ring costume and equipment required for all female and male martial arts fighters, with options for kickboxers.

- (a) The mouthpiece is for the purpose of the health and safety of the fighter in order to protect the fighter's mouth, and the ring costume requirement proposed is used in order for ring officials and the spectators to differentiate between each fighter.
- (b) Kickboxing and mixed martial arts contain many disciplines. Some kickboxers use padded footgear and shin protectors and some do not. Therefore, based upon input received from organizations interested in mixed martial arts and kickboxing and their knowledge and expertise in mixed martial arts and kickboxing, it was determined to provide the kickboxers with an option as to whether they would like to use padded footgear and shin protectors or not. Shoes are not allowed in kickboxing or martial arts contests for safety reasons.
- (c) The purpose of the abdominal guard is to protect the groin area of the fighter, which is a safety issue.
- (d) The purpose of the body shirt imposed upon female contestants is also for the safety of the female contestant.

Section 514 This section adds updated glove weights for kickboxers and martial arts fighters and adds a no glove requirement for martial arts disciplines that prohibit striking or punching.

- a) This section updates the glove weights to be used by kickboxers. The glove weights to be used by the various weight categories were determined based upon input received from organizations interested in martial arts and kickboxing and upon their knowledge and expertise in martial arts and kickboxing. For health and safety reasons it was also determined that when two fighters differ in weight classes, the contestants shall wear the gloves required for the higher weight classification. This recommended outcome meets the industry standards and would not jeopardize the health and safety of the fighters.
- (b) It was determined, based upon input received from organizations interested in martial arts and kickboxing and their knowledge and expertise in mixed martial arts and kickboxing, that a fighter in a martial arts contest will wear gloves that have no padding in the palm or fingertip area and are appropriate in weight for the fighter's hand size. This type of glove provides adequate protection when striking is used without inhibiting the grappling side of the sport.
- (c) This section which requires that the Commission approve all gloves used in martial arts and kickboxing is common practice in the boxing, martial arts and kickboxing industry. This regulation is consistent with existing Rule 318 which requires the commission to approve gloves used in professional and amateur boxing contests.
- (d) This rule allows for the possibility of a contest between fighters whose respective disciplines prohibit striking or punching. Such disciplines include grappling and jujitsu.

Section 515 This section establishes the time period a participant may not fight between bouts. It also establishes the required rest period between bouts in tournament format events and requires that a physician must examine tournament participants before each bout. It was determined that there should be a seven (7) day waiting period prior to a fighter fighting again, to protect the health and safety of the fighter. The rest period also allows for those instances when a fighter may have taken numerous strikes to the head during a bout won by the fighter who may have suffered a mild concussion for a certain time after a fight and not realize it. Therefore, to preclude the fighter from fighting with a concussion and obtaining greater and permanent injuries, the commission believes that a seven (7) day waiting period is a reasonable lapse of time.

The rest period between each bout is based upon the industry standard and because it is a reasonable amount of time for the fighter to recuperate and rehydrate prior to the next bout.

Section 516 This section adds explicit procedures for scoring the bout if a fighter cannot continue due to an injury. It was determined that since not all injuries will place an opponent in jeopardy that each injury should be evaluated on its own merit by the referee and doctor to determine if the bout should continue, be classified as a technical draw or a technical knockout. It was also determined that the five (5) minutes of recovery time has been the standard for mixed martial arts, boxing, and kickboxing, and it appears to be sufficient time for the injured fighter to regain composure and to prevent any unfair advantage to the fighter who caused the foul.

It was determined that if the referee did not see but suspects a foul, the referee should, in his/her sole discretion, be able to confer with the judges to determine where the foul may be placed and/or ask for a replay, if available, before rendering a decision. It was also determined that the referee should also have the discretion to consider any, all, or none of the opinions expressed in making a determination. Based on input received from experts in the mixed martial arts and kickboxing industry and referees that work both martial arts and kickboxing the authority and discretion provided by this section to the referee is in keeping with the current rules used in boxing, martial arts and kickboxing wherein it is the referees' duty to direct and control the bout (B&P Code Section 18730).

Section 517 This section adds explicit procedures to follow due to the result of one fighter intentionally fouling their opponent.

- a) It was determined that the five (5) minutes of recovery time has been the standard for mixed martial arts, boxing and kickboxing, and it appears to be sufficient time for the injured fighter to regain composure and to prevent any unfair advantage to the fighter who caused the foul and ample time for the referee in consultation with the ringside physician to make a determination whether or not the bout will continue. It was determined that these procedures were appropriate and reasonable in order to protect the health and safety of the fighter. These procedures are standard in the boxing, kickboxing and martial arts industry.
- b) This section identifies the consequences and possible punitive actions that can be taken against the offending fighter for an intentional foul that causes an injury extreme enough to stop the bout. The procedures for determining a decision and possible punitive actions are standard in the mixed martial arts, boxing and kickboxing industry.

Section 518 This section adds explicit procedures to follow due to the result of one fighter unintentionally fouling their opponent.

- (a) It was determined that the five (5) minutes of recovery time has been the standard for mixed martial arts, boxing and kickboxing, and it appears to be sufficient time for the injured fighter to regain composure and to prevent any unfair advantage to either fighter and ample time for the referee to make a determination whether or not the bout will continue. It was determined that these procedures were appropriate and reasonable in order to protect the health and safety of the fighter. These procedures are standard in the boxing, kickboxing and martial arts industry.
- (b) This section identifies the procedures to follow when an unintentional foul causes an injury to one of the fighters extreme enough to stop the bout. The procedures, which delineate the basis for determining a decision, are standard in the mixed martial arts, boxing and kickboxing industry.
- (c) This section instructs the referee to penalize the fighter guilty of the foul one or more points. This procedure is standard in the mixed martial arts, boxing and kickboxing industry.

Section 520 This section deletes the distinction between executed punches and effective kicks as judging criteria. It specifies that the ten (10) point must system will be used to score the bouts and that the majority opinion will determine the decision and if there is no majority, then the decision shall be a draw. This change meets the standard practice widely used in the kickboxing, mixed martial arts, and boxing industry.

Section 521 This section is repealed. This action repeals the minimum five (5) kicks per round requirement for a kickboxing contest and removes the punitive action taken against a fighter that does not execute five (5) kicks in a round. This change is consistent with the standard practice widely used in the mixed martial arts and kickboxing industry.

Section 522 This section delineates what constitutes a foul in kickboxing and martial arts and delineates possible punitive actions that may be taken against the offending fighter.

- a) Fouls listed in section (a) (1) through (a) (25) apply to both kickboxing and martial arts contests and were discussed by experts in martial arts and by physicians familiar with such contests. These fouls and the possible punitive actions that may be taken against the offending fighter are universal to the martial arts industry as well as to boxing and kickboxing. The biggest concern is to protect the fighters from any foreseeable harm or danger, and to prevent any unfair advantage of one opponent over another. With this in mind, Sections (a) (1) through (a) (25) were identified based upon input received from organizations interested in martial arts and kickboxing and their knowledge and expertise in mixed martial arts and kickboxing as viable technical fouls for both kickboxing and martial arts. These fouls are standard in the kickboxing, martial arts, and boxing industry.

- (b) This section identifies tactics that are considered fouls if used in any kickboxing matches, and specifies that use of these tactics will result in a warning and loss of points at the referee's discretion. These fouls and the resultant punitive actions are standard in the kickboxing and boxing industry.
- (c) This section identifies tactics that are considered fouls if used in any martial arts contest other than kickboxing and specifies that use of these tactics will result in a warning and loss of points at the referee's discretion. These fouls and the resultant punitive actions are standard in the martial arts and boxing industry.
- (d) This section delineates possible punitive actions in addition to the possible loss of points that may be taken against the offending fighter. The possible punitive actions are standard in the martial arts and boxing industry.

Section 523 This section establishes the parameters for the types, sizes and construction of rings or fighting area for kickboxing and martial arts contests. The parameters included in this section are all based on the current predominant practices for ring construction in the boxing, kickboxing and martial arts industry.

- (a) This section establishes that for kickboxing contests the ring or fighting area must meet the existing requirements for a boxing ring found in Rule 311 through Rule 313. This is standard for the kickboxing industry and was proposed to protect the safety of the fighter and immediate safety of the ringside officials, spectators, staff, and fighters.
- (b) This section establishes the minimum and maximum dimensions, specifies the materials to be used and describes the standards that must be met in the construction of a ring floor or fighting area for martial arts contests. This is standard for the martial arts industry and was proposed to protect the safety of the fighter and immediate safety of the ringside officials, spectators, staff, and fighters.
- (c) This section establishes guidelines that must be followed when assembling the ring platform and makes specific the standards that the materials used must meet when constructing a ring floor or fighting area for martial arts contests. It also specifies those parameters that the ringside tables and ring posts must meet to gain approval from the commission. It was determined that these guidelines are standard for the martial arts industry and are proposed to protect the safety of the fighter and immediate safety of the ringside officials, spectators, staff, and fighters.
- (d) This section establishes that the ring must be enclosed by a fence and delineates the standards that the enclosure must meet when assembling the ring enclosure. It was determined that this is standard for the martial arts industry and was proposed to protect the safety of the fighter and immediate safety of the ringside officials, spectators, staff, and fighters

Section 524 This section makes specific that it is the promoters' responsibility to ensure that acceptable sanitary measures are met and that the Physicians and commission representatives will check for any violations. It also specifies that the ring shall be cleaned before the event and before each bout. This section provides additional specific language to expand on the existing sanitation requirements found in Rule 292. Given that mixed martial arts fighters spend more time on the canvas than do boxers or kickboxers these additional health and safety measures are standard in the kickboxing, and martial arts industry.

Section 530 This section was amended to clarify that this rule, which establishes procedures to be followed by the referee and timekeeper when a fighter is knocked down, will be used only in a kickboxing contest. It was determined that this rule is not applicable to mixed martial arts as fighters may submit or "tap out". This is standard practice in the kickboxing and boxing industry.

Section 531 This section was amended to clarify that the discretionary standing eight (8) count will be used only in a kickboxing contest. It was determined that this rule is not applicable to mixed martial arts as

fighters may submit or “tap out”. This rule was amended for the health and safety of the fighters and is standard practice in the kickboxing industry.

Section 533 This section was amended to allow the Commission to authorize alternate rules or provisions for full contact martial arts championships and exhibitions so long as health and safety concerns are not jeopardized. Recognizing that many different forms of martial arts exist, and that differences exist between the rules used for championship contests and exhibitions by the myriad of sanctioning bodies, the committee amended this rule to provide the Commission with the flexibility to approve alternate rules for title fights and exhibitions.